1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

621 476 common meal was formerly a great bond of village unity. Mutual help within the village and the family group is practised on many occasions. There are a number of folk-tales designed to show the evil consequences of refusing to lend, whether beer-pots or more valued assistance. Many proverbs enjoin the necessity of prompt and effectual mutual helpfulness and co-operation, as e.g.

U o popela ukuavo ongandu ka lula.

[538] (He who saves another (from) a crocodile does not undress.)

476 The mechanism of co-operation, the round of daily life in village and field, together with the cycles of food and of work, are properly subjects of further study. Here the purpose is to show the definitely family nature of the village and of its life. To the [181] casual observer the Ovimbundu appear as severe individualists. Indeed, they are individualistic to a degree, but they have worked out mechanisms of mutual helpfulness and co-operation which functioned both on political lines under the aegis of the king and within the kinship units.

Social Life of the Village

517 521 562 The two foci of the village life are the Men's Club and the Dancing Floor. Even though no *onjango* may have been built, the Men's Club will find a place in which to carry on, at least when there may be fine weather. Leisure may be limited, but time for conversation will be found. Europeans often express wonder at the amount of conversation which goes on between Africans, for they cannot understand what people of apparently such limited opportunities and with what seems like so narrow an outlook may have to discuss at such great length. As for the Ovimbundu, there is nothing which is a greater hardship than lack of opportunity for conversation with their fellows. Under primitive conditions this is more especially true of the men, who, in their villages, are always surrounded by members of their own family group. Owing to their peculiar position in the village and their household pre-occupations, the women's social propensities may find less outlet in these public gatherings. When the villagers gather on the dancing floor and the gourds of beer go round, they always separate according to sex. Whether the occasion be formal or informal, I have seen the discussion carried to great lengths, with the pipe passed between the men, while the women sat silently by,

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

some pulling on their stubby little pipes and watching the men. As the men smoke, they may pass the pipe from mouth to mouth, but not so the women.

Tobacco (*akaya*) is a great vehicle for sociability whether in the pipe or in the form of snuff. 'Snuffing is held to clear the head, to clarify the thought, to enlighten the eyes, to sharpen the hearing, and comfort the heart.'[1] 'Taking a pinch of snuff, between the forefinger and the thumb, is unknown . . . and would be considered . . . very unsatisfactory. . . . They pour about a teaspoonful into the palm of the hand, and burying their . . . nostrils in the peppery mixture snort it up loudly, aided by a rotary motion of the half-closed hand.'[2]

Beer (*ocimbombo*) is of even greater importance. Its place has long been threatened by such drinks as the stronger beer made from emmer wheat (*ekundi*), mead (*ingundu* and *ocasa*), and imported rum. Within the past thirty or forty years the Ovimbundu have themselves learned to distil rum (*okacipembe*) from sweet potatoes, sugar-cane, pumpkins, &c., and although the industry is illegal, it has grown to great proportions and nothing now seems able to stop it. It is the widespread use of this strong drink, with its concomitant evils, which is to-day the greatest enemy of the social life.

The dance is probably the most important element in the social life of the village. The Ovimbundu have many different dances and they dance on every occasion and on the slightest provocation. I have collected thirty songs to accompany dances. About three-fourths of them are sometimes used at funerals or at other ceremonial occasions, some of them are for more frivolous purposes, and most of those which are used for ceremonies are used at other times also. It is not for nothing that an Umbundu equivalent of the proverb 'Strike while the iron is hot', runs as follows:

Nda wa mõlã oñoma, piluka:
When you see a drum, dance:
Oñoma ka yi muãwã lwãli.
A drum may not be seen twice.

During one of my visits to Ngendo there was an important funeral with much dancing at Ndumba, just across the valley. At

[1] Tucker, *Drums in the Darkness* (Toronto and New York; Doran, 1927), p. 38.
[2] Monteiro, *Angola and the River Congo*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1875), vol. ii, p. 271.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

On nights when there is little or no moonlight, the evening gatherings in the village sometimes, although not always, follow the sex division, with the men and boys in the *onjango*, and the women and girls at one or more of the kitchens. Discussion of affairs, with youth listening to age, is the usual order, but the time is often passed in the recital of folk-tales or in propounding riddles.

Riddles are more especially a field of youth but age also enjoys hearing the answers given. A favourite occupation of the men, especially by day, is *ocela*, a game known all over Africa and in other parts of the world as well.[1] Junod calls it 'the national game of Africa'.[2]

The Ovimbundu have brought recreation to the service of their work. Europeans are often irritated by the amount of conversation which Ovimbundu carry on during working hours, but on consideration it may be found that were it not for the conversation and other psychological aids, the work might be quite unendurable. This is especially the case with regard to road work and many types of contract labour. Road songs and work songs are of real help in keeping up morale and in prolonging endurance. Most of them seem to have been developed in the days of the caravan trade, but they have not been forgotten and are now used on many occasions.

A word about ceremonial occasions before leaving the social life of the village. Some rites and ceremonies are celebrated so quietly that they are not even social occasions. Most of them, however, are very social. This is especially true of funerals and post-mortuary rites. During visits to Ngendo I was able to witness two post-mortuary rites and the funeral of an important person of a near-by village. Other ceremonial occasions, such as weddings and a return from a trading expedition, also call for much sociability, but funerals and post-mortuary rites are the social occasions which occupy the most time and attention and make for the greatest conviviality.

[1] Known under the name *Mancala*, which is evidently a Bantu word, or taken from ene; cf. the Umbundu *oku mangala*, to play. Hambly mentions *ocela*, op. cit., p. 219. See also Nevinson, op. cit., p. 91. The *New Standard Dictionary* (Funk and Wagnalls) attributes to Arabian origin both the game and the word *Manbalah*.

[2] H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, 2nd ed., vol. i, p. 345 f.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

556 578 472 The attitude toward success in agriculture indicated by the foregoing is held in some measure toward marked success in other professions, but in lesser degree, except perhaps where trading is taken up individually or by two persons in partnership. One of the earliest observers, Pinheiro de Lacerda (*c.* 1790), noted that accusations of witchcraft were most often levelled at the wealthier members of the community.[1] This fear of success has continued down to the present day, but while trading was an open group enterprise in which many individuals acquired wealth, success in that field came to be accepted more quickly than in the more individualistic work of farming. At the present time, commercial activities are carried on largely by individuals alone or in a limited partnership, and the practice, or at least the suspicion, of witchcraft in connexion with them seems to be on the increase. Some may feel that similar attitudes with regard to successful results from cultivation of the soil are now held less strongly than formerly, but [754] I know of no evidence to support such a feeling. One of the commonest traditional patterns for witchcraft is that of a partnership of a senior and a junior member—of parent and child, or of mother's brother and sister's son. That is one reason why urgent suggestions by an older person concerning choice of a profession by a younger are looked upon with disfavour among the Ovimbundu.

868 562 A child should be taught enough diligence and application in cultivating that he or she may not lack the necessities in later adult life. Every boy will take to trading and bargaining almost as naturally as eating, drinking, breathing, and sleeping. Commerce still retains so much of its former glamour that every boy will take it up if and when opportunity offers. The care of younger children comes even more naturally to the girl, and she must also learn the housekeeper's art. Many folk-tales and songs indicate a reluctance on the part of girls to dedicate themselves with diligence to cultivation. In the days of the rubber trade, when girls could also join caravans for the coast and to the interior as porters, there may have been some real basis for this, but at the present time girls are convinced and enthusiastic cultivators, almost 100 per cent.[2] The

[1] *Annaes Maritimos e Coloniaes*, 5a Ser., p. 489 f.

[2] Women coming to live in the coast towns or in other European settlements where they have no fields or gardens find adjustment to life without agricultural labours very difficult.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

heavy tasks and the close and constant routine of housework, on the other hand, sometimes require more than casual urging by the mother. Biographical evidence agrees with observation on this point, but nevertheless few girls reach puberty without attaining proficiency in the various household tasks. The decline of polygyny has probably hastened the girl's education in the household arts. When there is only one wife in the household, not only must she have more regular help from her daughters, but also it is more likely that the daughters will have to take on full responsibility at those times when the mother is unable for ritual reasons to take part in the preparation of her husband's food.[1] Biographical sources indicate that this tendency was already operating at least fifty or sixty years ago.

Every Ocimbundu assumes that his sustenance will come from cultivation of the soil. The 'professions' which a child may learn are therefore in the nature of side-lines. Although the Ovimbundu are not a true cattle-rearing people, they possess many domestic animals, especially dogs, pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens. Chickens are owned and looked after by both men and women, but the other animals only by the men. Boys may have small stock of their own, and a boy's economic independence most frequently begins with owning a chicken. Herding has been a function of the sister's son and even now there is reluctance on the part of boys to herd for their fathers. Animal husbandry is largely a commercial enterprise, save in the extreme southern tribes of Kalukembe, Ngalangi, &c.

The principal side-line 'professions' (*ovipinduko*) may be listed as follows:

FOR GIRLS

Basket-making, which is practised by all to a limited extent, but excelled in by relatively few.

Pottery-making.

Medical-practice and Divination (for conditions, see *infra*).

FOR BOYS

Mat-making, which includes the making of four distinct types of mats each of which has its specialist; the making of trays and large baskets for granaries.

[1] i.e. at the times of her menstrual periods, after the birth of a child, &c.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

importance, but treatment of that subject must be reserved for another time. The balance maintained in the Umbundu social system, which has already been noted,[1] together with woman's important position in the economic sphere, give to the women and girls a relatively satisfactory place in Umbundu society. It has also been noted that woman's sphere has suffered less disintegration than has man's. Although the girl may have somewhat less freedom than the boy, her personal prospects are more stable, and in the long run more satisfactory.

Adjustments between parents and children among the Ovimbundu are relatively satisfactory. The fact that there are no specific father–daughter or mother–son avoidances or taboos, beyond the general laws of incest which nearly all cultures maintain, indicates an absence of strain in these relationships. In our own society adult–child fixations, and particularly the parent–child fixations, with the consequent repressions, are very common and are held to be responsible, at least in part, for much trouble including difficulties of adjustment at pubescence.[2] In traditional Umbundu society such fixations occur very infrequently, if at all.[3] In this context we should be reminded of the following factors:

1. The early and continued close association of the child largely (although not exclusively) with the parent of the same sex.[4]
2. The association of the child with many (classificatory) 'fathers' and 'mothers' which may result in a partial transfer of affection.[2]
3. The absence of fondling, kissing, and other close bodily contact in display of affection.[5]

The picture in these respects is not unlike that of the Samoans given by Margaret Mead.[6] In some other respects it is quite different but it is similar in the apparent absence of a period of adolescent *Sturm und Drang*. What actual correlations there may be between parent–child fixations and a period of adolescent stress I do not know. The absence of any such period has been reported

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 43.

[2] Cf. Allport, op. cit., pp. 355 ff.

[3] The proverbial inability of a widow properly to rear a child (*vide supra*, p. 102) may indicate difficulties of this sort.

[4] *Vide supra*, p. 98.

[5] No display of affection whatever is congenial to the Ovimbundu, except to babies and between adolescent age-mates of the same sex.

[6] Op. cit., chap. x.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

The picture of types gathered at Ngalangi (Plate LXXXIX, Fig. 3) shows, reading from left to right along the back row, then along the front row in the same direction: an Ocimbundu; an Ocivokue; a man of the Vangangella; an Uluchazi woman; a Lunda man; and two types of the Vangangella.

The M'Bunda man and woman photographed at Cangamba display characteristic deformation of the upper central incisors (Plate XCI, Figs. 1, 2). Photographs of a Mussurongo man and two women, taken about a hundred miles east of Malange, show no great difference from the Ovimbundu except in their shorter stature (Plates LXX, Figs. 1, 2; LXXI, Figs. 1, 2). The Bushman (Plate LXIX, Figs. 1, 2) shows a type found wandering in small bands in the south of Angola. These photographs were taken at Cassanga.

The dress and personal ornaments of the tribes dwelling to the south of the Ovimbundu (Plates LIX–LXVIII) are entirely different from the clothing and decorative styles observed in the areas occupied by the Ovimbundu. This statement is true with regard to bodily covering, ornaments, tooth mutilation, use of pigment, scarification, and hairdressing.

In respect of all these factors, males and females of the Ovimbundu have distinctive patterns which do not appear to have influenced, or to have been influenced by the styles around them.

In working southward from Elende I passed through typical Umbundu cultures until the vicinity of Kipungo was reached. At this place the change in physical appearance, ornaments, and hairdressing was remarkable both for its abruptness and distinctiveness. But the change from agricultural to pastoral pursuits is gradual.

A comparison of photographs indicates at once the truth of this statement, which can be further illustrated by a detailed description of the ornaments observed from Kipungo to Mongua.

By far the most important of these is the circular *omba* shell made from the basal part of a gastropod shell of the genus *Conus* Linn; and allied forms. These are highly prized, not because of any intrinsic worth, but on account of strong sentiment arising from their bequest, which is usually in the female line. I have, however, seen a few males of the Vakuanyama wearing these shells. For the old *omba* shells monetary offers equal to the earnings of a woman for a period of six months were made, but without success. One woman wavered somewhat, but finally decided that she dared not return to her home without her *omba* shells. From a Portuguese trader I bought, for a small sum, *omba* shells showing stages in manufacture.

672 bility of women is mentioned in describing the penalties for adultery and theft.

562 681 The penalties for offences against the king were undoubtedly more severe than those imposed for the same offences against a commoner. Ngonga says that the punishments for crimes against a chief or medicine-man were, and are now, the same as the penalties for offences against any other person. It seems, however, that if the chief were a very powerful man, he could claim penalties which would have been appropriate for offences against a king.

685 A thief was punished by beating, in addition to which he would have to pay a fine to the people from whom he had stolen, but he rarely escaped without the beating. The thief would be beaten just as much for stealing one animal as he would for stealing many. If a woman stole from her neighbor's garden, those who caught her would tie her and take her to her husband, who would pay compensation and then beat her. A child caught stealing would be taken to the maternal uncle or to his own father. If a woman stole from relations she would probably have no punishment other than a beating. Her husband would have to compensate the relations. Stealing honey from hives is an offence that is punished according to the general laws relating to theft.

696 If a man was sentenced to a death penalty, or to a beating, there was an official appointed by the king or by the chief to see the sentence carried out. This representative was called *ukuenje welombe* which means "the servant, or minister, of the court."

682 Ngonga described the penalty for murder saying, "It was a terrible thing they did to the murderer. A tight triangle of wood was fastened on to his neck by a peg and to this a cord was attached so that he was suspended to the roof with his feet barely touching the ground. In some instances his head was placed through a hole in the door of his house while his body was inside the hut. He had very little food or water and people threw things at him. He was kept tied up for a month to see whether he could pay something. Suppose he could not pay, and nobody would pay for him, he was taken outside the village where his head was cut off. If he had many possessions, he said on the first day, 'If you will take this thing off my neck I will pay two oxen and two slaves.' The payment would be made, not to the wife or children of the murdered man, but to the brother of the mother of the murdered man, or to the mother of the murdered man, or to the son of a sister of the victim. If the murderer agreed to make the payment the people kept him tied up until the

Pg. 203

Social Life

fines were in their hands. If he murdered one of the royal family 682
he was killed after he had paid the fine." The punishment of a woman [562]
who has committed a murder is the same as that for a man.

Ombulungu is the name given to trial by poison ordeal. The 695
medicine-man holds out both his hands, in each of which there is a potato, only one of which is poisoned. The accused man says, "If I have done this thing, this potato will be poison for me. If I have not done this thing, this potato will be food for me." The complainant says, "If this is not the man who poisoned my brother, this potato will be poison for me." They sit in front of the medicine-man, and each must take the potato in the hand opposite to him. The poison makes a man very sick. His mouth swells so that he cannot speak.

When a woman was accused of murder her son or her brother [562]
would take her place in the poison ordeal. A boy of fifteen years of age would have the same treatment as a man. "I don't think a girl would kill anybody. I never heard about it," said Ngonga. It appears that resort was made to a medicine-man when the accused was thought to have committed murder by poison or magic. If the murderer used weapons, the accuser, who was usually a relative, was entitled to kill him with the kind of weapon used for the crime.

The penalties for adultery were the same as those for murder. 684
The woman appears to have escaped punishment, except that "her husband would not have her any more." The male adulterer had to pay the husband; if he could not pay or escape, the husband had the right to kill him. In the old days the price for adultery was two oxen, a pig, and a slave. At the present day a man who has committed adultery and made payment, possibly takes the woman and all children under three years of age. The husband has the right to decide whether the adulterer has the privilege of taking the woman and her children. An adulterer with one of the king's wives was castrated but not killed. He might, instead of mutilation, pay a very [567]
high price, while he himself along with his sisters and the sons of his sisters, would become slaves of the king. If a man could not pay, he might be sold as a slave in order to provide money for the fine. Criminal law did not distinguish between responsibility for inten- [671]
tional and unintentional offences.

It is very difficult to say how much of the old law survives. One 681
feels that underneath the ostensible Portuguese rule there is an active 177
native life that is resisting subjugation.

Only two years ago Ngonga paid an ox to prevent one of his female 686
relatives from being pawned. Within the past ten years Ngonga has

577 Lying is strongly disapproved and the liar is called *ohembi*. The Ovimbundu appreciate hospitality (*unu*) which also means generosity. A man who is hospitable is said to be *ongavi*. Greediness, which is disliked, is described by the word *oku sapa* ("to be greedy"). There are standards of honesty in sales and exchanges. A deceiver in trade is *ohembi*.

836 With regard to the relation of the sexes in early years it may be said that, in spite of boy and girl friendships, and the communal sleeping of boys and girls at the home of one of the girls, a man expects to marry a virgin, a point which has been dealt with in describing marriage ceremonies.

Naturally there is a difficulty in obtaining precise information respecting the details of these nocturnal gatherings of boys and girls. Ngonga said that girls inform their parents concerning the house where the night is to be spent, and there is a point of etiquette requiring that girls must not go to a house where boys are staying together.

864 Standards of conduct already described under courtship are a result of direct teaching by parents. Marriage rules and a classificatory system of relationships, with its prohibitive decrees, are taught in the home, in the men's council house, and at initiation ceremonies where such exist. In addition to these sources of instruction there is no doubt an unconscious absorption of ideas and standards. The power of suggestion is always at work through everyday examples.

831 Apart from demands made by tribal custom and direct instruction there are variable personal standards of modesty. Ngonga states
● [562] that many lascivious stories are told among men, and when the men are drunk, they tell these to women. "Sometimes the women laugh, but the good women do not like to hear these tales."

576 A male commoner when meeting the king bows low, extends his
643 arms, claps his palms and says, "*ohosi* ["lion"] *akuku* ["grandfather"]."
565 Only the old people follow the ancient custom of falling on their knees when greeting the king. The Ovimbundu never were in the habit of doing more profound obeisance, but the Vangangella, when greeting one of their kings, rub their chins on the ground and place dust on their chests. Even at the present day a woman or child of the Ovimbundu is expected to kneel when greeting a king, but such an acknowledgment is not now usual in greetings given by a male commoner. The reply of the king to the commoner is "*kalunga*." This word enters into greetings of all kinds. The literal meaning of the word is "the sea," "king," "god," or "death," but the interpretation

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

fish to stay together at the bottom of the river, is the reason alleged for this taboo. A young hunter is ceremonially initiated. Throughout his life he has to make sacrifice to the ancestral spirits of hunters who are in the house where bows of famous hunters are kept; these ceremonies must be performed before a hunter leaves for the chase. A caravan is a commercial undertaking, but, before setting out, the head of a dead chief is asked for a guarantee of success; meanwhile a sacrifice is made by a medicine-man. A wooden image, when consulted by the medicine-man, indicates the correct caravan route. These instances illustrate a blending of the sacred and the profane in occupations.

Sexual relationships among the Ovimbundu form a basis of social life, as they do in all communities, but the sexual aspect is not all-pervading and completely dominant.

In early years children separate during play. Boys play games of hunting and warfare, enter into competition with bows and arrows, or amuse themselves with wood-carving. Girls find amusement in imitating their mothers in the occupations of making pottery and baskets, and in cultivating the fields. The small sums of money which a girl derives from the sale of produce from her own corn patch are personal property which she usually spends on trinkets and palm oil. This measure of economic independence, combined with considerable freedom of choice in marriage, indicates an individuality that has not been generally recognized.

I have mentioned among the Ovimbundu a system of friendship between boys and girls of from twelve to sixteen years, which permits the children to sleep together in the home of one of the girls in whose house the early evening has been spent. Cohabitation is forbidden, and pregnancy would be a disgrace. The practice is not unlike that of night visits by a lover in certain European countries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (W. Goodsell, A History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution, p. 365). Clearly sex is a factor that plays its part as a formative influence from infancy onward, until final emphasis of sex dichotomy is made by tribal initiations.

The social position of woman may be considered by selecting a few points from the data relating to courtship, marriage, and divorce. Marriages are sometimes arranged during infancy, but this does not invalidate the previous statement that considerable freedom of choice is allowed; a girl is not compelled to follow arrangements made during her childhood. A bride has to make contributions toward the

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

105
562 domestic equipment. Ritual enters into the introduction of the bride to her home, as was shown by explaining the functions of three elderly women, who erect the fireplace, bring new fire from the chief's house, and assist the bride in a ceremonial way. If a husband has reason to doubt the virginity of his bride, he bores a hole in her cloth with a firebrand, and makes her carry the cloth to her parents. But the marriage is not necessarily invalidated, since the husband is reconciled by a return of some portion of his gifts to the parents.

593
105 Some light is thrown on the ethics of family life by considering the meeting which takes place in the men's council house (*onjango*) before the bride goes to her new home. Here in the presence of relatives from both families the father of the bride says, "We are taking these things for our daughter, we hope she will not shame us." He turns to his daughter, enjoining her to be hospitable, never forgetting to feed her husband's people when they call.

Minor incidents help in a study of the psychology of family life. When husband and wife have quarreled, the latter goes away for a few hours into the bush and arranges that a number of burrs shall be clinging to her dress when she returns. If her husband silently and spontaneously picks these from her cloth, amicable feeling is restored.

Analysis of the grounds for divorce shows that women have their rights, though the male is in the more favorable position. In Rome the legal rights of a matron were slender, but in actual practice she held an important and honorable position. Similarly the status of an Ocimbundu woman is higher than the divorce laws imply.

The human side of family differences was well brought out by studying the interference and indirect influence of relatives on the relationship of husband and wife. Details have been given indicating that divorce is not entirely a matter of adjustment between families; the village chief may be called upon to act as arbiter. The final ceremony of repudiation, at which the husband slaps his wife's back saying, "It is finished," is a public rite. There is here a close connection between family consent and public ratification.

Although a woman may return to her parents under certain conditions which justify the divorce of the husband, parents are not anxious to encourage this practice. Marriage tokens would have to be returned to the husband of their daughter; moreover there might be a difficulty in securing another husband. In this instance a conflict occurs between parental obligations and cupidity. This is again shown by the argument which always arises respecting

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30)1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

containing the head and attaching it to a pole by which it was supported on the shoulders of two bearers. Then followed a series of questions from the village chief (sekulu), and answers were supposed to be given through forward or backward swinging of the pole. A forward swing was affirmative, and a backward swing was negative. I have seen this procedure followed with a coffin supported as described, and the questions related to the cause of death.

The head of a king would be asked, "Do you want an ox for sacrifice? We will give you one." "Do you want a new skin for your head? We will give you one." Such was the ceremony for bringing spiritual aid to what was otherwise a commercial undertaking.

A wooden figure of a female decorated with black feathers was an indispensable part of the equipment of a medicine-man who accompanied a caravan. When in doubt with regard to the path he knelt at the parting of the ways and consulted the figure. Replies came in a falsetto voice attained by plugging his nostrils. Horns containing a mixture of fat, charcoal, and other substances were carried so that they might be planted near a camping ground to drive away thieves and leopards. These horns are still used and are obtainable.

At the present day a belated Ocimbundu, who fears the sun may set before he reaches the next village, will take some earth from an ant hill. This earth he places in the fork of a tree saying, "O sun wait for me a little while."

Examination of the culture of the Ovimbundu, combined with observations on the Umbundu language and somatic traits, indicate that the Ovimbundu are a part of the Bantu peoples of southwest Africa. They have, however, taken advantage of the open Benguela highlands to develop their system of agriculture far beyond that which is usually carried on by Negroes in forest clearings.

In agricultural work a clear division of labor is observed. Men clear timber and burn the bush, after which hoe cultivation is in the hands of women, though men assist with the harvest. Unmarried girls help in the fields and each has a piece of ground whose products are the cultivator's personal property. This gives unmarried girls a measure of economic independence. Usually a girl spends the proceeds of her work in buying trinkets and palm-oil for personal decoration. Under their system of polygyny each wife has her own field, utensils, and a separate hut with its fire and cooking arrangements. The husband visits each hut for four consecutive nights, though in some districts there is a seven night cycle. Men always take evening meals in the mens' council house (onjango) in the center (to notice the tombs of hunters, which consist of cairns of stones enclosing a)[1]

[1] [Printer's error: This sentence refers to p. 159. -- Analyst]

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30) 1934 FP 13 Mbundu FP13

595 of the village. The meals are brought there by those wives who are at the
562 time cohabiting with their husbands. But an exception is made in case of menstruation, for a woman is not allowed to cook or handle food during her period. At such times the preparation and transfer of food is carried out by another wife, and of course the time comes when such a service can be
241 requited. I found no survival of agricultural rites such as offering first fruits or other similar ceremony.

In some tribes of Sudanic and Bantu Negroes agricultural rites are important in relation to sowing and harvest, since land is in the first place the property of dead ancestors, but so far as my inquiries go such rites are not now known to the Ovimbundu. Maize may be pounded only on rocks that have been consecrated by the medicine-man: he kills a chicken and sprinkles
[462 the surface of the rock with its blood. Only women may pound corn, and a
838] youth who persisted in dressing as a woman and pounding on the rocks was beaten by his relatives. This information gave a clue to homosexual practices, but the information obtained was meager.

231 In connection with the care of domestic animals many tempting digressions present themselves, but I am concerned only with beliefs, ritual, and division of labor. Chickens are of ritual importance since they provide the least expensive sacrifice, and in connection with industries the piacular use of chickens will presently be mentioned. For sacrificial purposes a goat is preferred to a sheep since it makes more noise; but the reason for this is not clear, though making a surmise I would say that the noise better appeases ancestral spirits to whom most sacrifices are made. Pigs are kept, but I did not hear of them being used for sacrifice. The animals so far mentioned have little or no attention. Goats fend entirely for themselves; so also do sheep. Chickens receive maize from women and children, who also gather the eggs. Pigs receive maize and mush from cooking pots or that discarded in making beer, but they depend largely on foraging in refuse pits.

The castration of pigs and bulls is the work of a male specialist who receives a fee of four yards of cloth for operating on the latter animal, but only a small gift of tobacco or similar recognition for castrating a pig.

The Ovimbundu have acquired cattle of the long-horned Damara breed, and in connection with the care of these some important points of ritual and division of labor should be recorded. The herding of cattle is
[462 exclusively the work of males, and I am not aware that women have any
234 tasks connected with cattle. Only in recent times have some male owners of cattle begun to milk the cows. This they do somewhat stealthily, deceiving the cow from time to time by allowing the calf to suck for a few moments. If asked why milk is not used, the owners say that calves deprived of suck-

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13
Angola FP1

switching to Umbundu or Portuguese for addressing an African, whereas Portuguese is the language used at the Catholic missions even between non-Portuguese.

The African Catholic priests then have approximate equality and identity of status with their white confreres within the hierarchic framework of the diocese of Nova Lisboa; the Ovimbundu pastors lack this equality and identity but instead possess greater independence and opportunities for leadership within the Umbundu Native Church, which functions as a partly autonomous body.[19] The difference in functions of the priests and pastors is related to the ultimate aims of missionary action; for the Catholic missions the establishment of a local clergy is part of the complete incorporation of Ovimbundu into the universal Church; for the Protestants the establishment of a local clergy is part of the building up of a totally independent local church.

I attempt later in this work to show what roles the missions play in social life among the Ovimbundu and in the relations between the 'civilized' and native population. Here it should be noted that it is the missions rather than commerce or the Government which have opened status-giving positions to the Ovimbundu. The clergy have higher statuses in the total Angolan society than do any other of the *assimilados*. They combine this high status *vis-à-vis* the Europeans with leadership in groupings which include the ordinary villagers, unlike the various welfare societies in which the *assimilados* associate.

So much then for the general pattern of cities, communications, and trains, of administration, missionaries, and traders. I now turn to the particular features of the neighbourhood where I lived. Bimbe is said to derive from the name of a princess (Mbimbi) who ruled as a vassal of the king of Bailundo.[20] Here at the beginning of this century Samakaka, a

[19] The missions provide supervision and specialist services including agricultural instruction, community development, education, and health. Village work and actual pastoral activity is the responsibility of the Native Church. For an account of such specialist services see M. F. Cushmann, *Missionary Doctor in Africa*, New York, 1944 and A. Strangeways in *African Woman* (June 1956).

[20] Information obtained locally from 'civilised' people. Princesses were very rare among the Ovimbundu, though Childs notes that Sambos (Sambu) had a woman ruler early in its history (p. 178).

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

leaning towards matrilateral rather than patrilateral brothers. The classificatory kinship terminology, and the lack of genealogies and kinship groups, means that a man knows a great many classificatory brothers living in his neighbourhood of whom he vaguely recognizes some as 'close' others as 'distant', but with whom his relations are not especially significant. A boy or girl who loses his or her parents is fairly likely, judging from the evidence of Epalanga households, to settle with a full- or half-brother or sister.

Formerly, owing to virilocal marriage, a sister was geographically separated from her brother, and even if widowed or divorced would not necessarily return to his village, but might go to her mother's brother.[24] With this geographical separation went a situation of possible conflict, since the brother could sell his sister's children to recoup his own debts, and the shadow of sorcery fears seems to have touched this relationship.[25] The suppression of the rubber and slave trades and the subsequent disintegration of the kinship groups have removed the economic pressures which made for conflict between matrilineal kin and the residence rules which divided people locally into groups of agnates and their wives. The brother-sister tie has therefore changed its content, since it is released from the heavy pressures formerly active in the matrilineal kin groups.

It would be wrong to produce any such generalization as 'a woman must always be under the guardianship of a male relative'. A woman who is widowed or divorced or whose husband is away working will tend, however, to develop a particular link with the male head of some household, her own kinsman usually, except in the case of a labour migrant's wife, when it may be a kinsman of her husband. Thus in Epalanga, Augusto (25) aided the household of his absent full brother Julio (29).

Aid is most likely to be given to a kinsman's wife when the two households are close together. The underlying idea seems to be to keep the kinsman's household together rather than any duty of aiding an affine. For a widow or divorced woman or the

[24] Childs, pp. 25–37.

[25] H. W. Nevinson (*A Modern Slavery*) gives a complicated story which suggests this possibility (p. 101).